

The UCLA Extension Film Society

first season — fall, 1961

Program 5

ROBERT WISE'S *THE SET-UP*

and

LAUREL AND HARDY in *BIG BUSINESS*

and

JEROME LEIBLING'S *POW WOW*



Direction Robert Wise
 Producer Richard Goldstone
 Screen Play Art Cohn
 From the Poem by Joseph Moncure March
 Photography Milton Krasner
 Art Directors Albert S. D'Agostino
 Jack Okey
 Musical Director C. Bakaleinikoff
 Fight Sequences John Indrisano
 Set Decorations Darrell Silvera
 James Altivies
 Editor Roland Gross
 Sound Phil Brigandi
 Assistant Director Edward Killy

Cast

Stoker Robert Ryan
 Julie Audrey Totter
 Tiny George Tobias
 Little Boy Allan Baxter
 Gus Wallace Ford
 Red Percy Helton
 Tiger Nelson Hal Fieberling
 Shavley Darryl Hickman
 Moore Kenny O'Morrison
 Luther Hawkins James Edwards
 Gunboat Johnson David Clarke
 Sonia Phillip Pine
 Danny Edwin Max

Running Time - 72 minutes

THE SET-UP

The Set-Up, ably directed by Robert Wise, is another of those hard, handsome, bruising little pieces which Hollywood has sent us. Literally, in this case, bruising; almost a third of the film takes place in the ring during a four-round bout of unexampled ferocity. Except in Champion Charlie-- the only film concerned with this topic which hitherto I have found myself enjoying--two men, hardly able to stand, have probably never hit one another quite so hard and often. It is, even by tough standards, a brutal exhibition; but then the whole point of the film is to show-up the brutality of promoters, audience and hangers-on in the lower rungs of prize-fighting. "The March of Time" recently made its report on American professional boxing, and its conclusion seemed to be that of all rackets going by the name of sport, this was the biggest and most glittering, and showed least pity for those it broke.

The Set-Up, then, shows us a last appearance in the evening of a boxer (Robert Ryan), aged thirty-five, fourth on the programme and likely to add one more to his fatal list of defeats. Against a younger opponent he does magnificently to win; and is then beaten up and has his hand smashed by gangsters who have squared, as they think, his defeat. He will open that cigar-store his wife has had her eye on: the evening has begun in a cheap hotel with wrangling on this very point. She wanders about the town in a suicidal state of nerves unable to face the roar of an audience out for blood. The story has no frills; it begins, making its own pace, goes on, and ends; the boxer has only to walk across the street to the hall where he is fighting, and that particular corner of a town, with its funland, chop-suey, dance-hall, and shabby populous air of back-entrances is impressed with growing brilliance. Almost more than the hall itself and the packed dressing room, one remembers the alley where the unlucky winner is set on, among dust bins and to the music from an open door on a fire-escape high above. Photography as well as story has worked towards this climax.

Mr. Robert Ryan gives a performance admirably in character as the declining boxer; as his wife, Miss Audrey Totter, though sincere enough, seems a little miscast. It is, in fact, rather too thin a part. The weakness of the film is that while we feel their situation at times excruciatingly, they themselves are victims rather than individuals. Reality comes from the surroundings, the squalors of provincial touring, the shades of fight or impending collapse in the boxers themselves, and most of all in the **sweating, roaring, vindictive crowd**. Nothing jovial about them. Are such audiences really more brutal than those of, say, Rowlandson's day? No doubt they have been swelled by the bear-baiting, cock-fighting element for whom now there are no animal jousts; and the chance visitor, the outsider, is far more aware of sadism. "Kill him, kill him!" yells one woman repeatedly. A blind man feels the noise and movement about him and listens to a companion's running commentary. Only the gangster and his moll remain icily detached; his moment comes later on when he has his victim spread-eagled by three thugs in an alley.

This is a film with not many consolations for the soft-hearted (though hero and heroine are almost too thinly sympathetic to be true). One takes it for granted that Americans will make such a film well. But compare The Set-Up with our own gallant if feeble little effort to pin down dirt-track-racing on the screen!

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